

Opinions

February 2012

Egypt's revolution one year on – the
overthrow of Hosni Mubarak was
just the start

Sasha Simic

C
A

COMMONWEALTH
ADVISORY BUREAU

Opinions

Text © Commonwealth Advisory Bureau

The information in this publication is believed to be correct at the time of manufacture. Whilst care has been taken to ensure that the information is accurate, the publisher can accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions or for changes to the details given. Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Commonwealth Advisory Bureau or the publisher.

First published 2012

ISBN: 978-0-9569546-8-8

Published by and available from the Commonwealth Advisory Bureau (CA/B)

Tel: +44 (0)20 7862 8865
Fax: +44 (0)20 7862 8813
Email: CAB@sas.ac.uk
Web: www.commonwealthadvisorybureau.org
Mail: Commonwealth Advisory Bureau
Institute of Commonwealth Studies
Senate House
University of London
London
WC1E 7HU
United Kingdom

Egypt's revolution one year on – the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak was just the start¹

Sasha Simic

In this *Opinion*, Sasha Simic, a long-standing democracy activist and trade unionist, argues that Egypt's revolution of the 25 January 2011 was a response to years of neo-liberalism which have made a tiny elite there obscenely wealthy but which have impoverished the vast majority of its 85mn-strong population. The Egyptian masses, he argues, have achieved miracles in toppling Mubarak's brutal dictatorship – a tyranny to which Western powers gave massive financial and military aid for 30 years – but the struggle cannot stop with Mubarak's removal. The future of the revolution is now being contested between various forces. The current leadership of Egypt – the military rulers of Scaf (the Supreme Council of Armed Forces) – wants Egypt to continue on its neo-liberal path. For these leaders, the revolution is 'over'. They want 'Mubarakism without Mubarak' and are increasingly prepared to use lethal force to maintain 'order'. But the masses on the streets and in the factories and the fields want what free-market dogma has denied them – bread, work, land and a future worth living. The current world crisis has already discredited neo-liberalism in the eyes of many millions who are searching for a better way to live. The outcome of the Egyptian revolution will have world-changing implications. If the masses can build an Egypt which starts from the needs of the people rather than the requirements of the 'market' they will be mapping out a path millions of others will follow.

Simic argues that the key to the outcome of the revolution rests with Egypt's enormous working class. The argument at the heart of his *Opinion* is simple: another world is both possible and necessary. A victorious Egyptian revolution could lay the foundations for that world.

'It is our opinion that if this revolution does not lead to the fair distribution of wealth it is not worth anything. Freedoms are not complete without social freedoms. The right to vote is naturally dependent on the right to a loaf of bread.' – Declaration of Egyptian Independent Trade Unionists, Cairo, 19 February 2011²

On Monday 19 December 2011 the Egyptian newspaper *Al Shorouk* carried General Abdel Moneim Kato's comments on protests outside the Cabinet offices in Cairo which demanded the end to the military rule of Egypt by the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (Scaf), led by Field Marshal Mohammed Hussain Tantawi. Kato, a retired army officer who advises Scaf's public relations department, dismissed the demonstrators as 'delinquents' in the pay of foreign governments, who 'deserved to be thrown into Hitler's ovens'. Kato's pronouncements came after the army's violent suppression of the protests, then into their third week. The action left 12 protestors dead and hundreds injured and culminated in a vicious attack on a woman protestor by three heavily armoured soldiers who stripped her of her abaya as they beat her unconscious. Video footage of this outrage shocked millions across the region. Kato justified the attack on the woman, popularly dubbed the 'Blue bra girl', on the grounds that she had been 'insulting the army through a megaphone.'³

Kato might be dismissed as a spectacularly inept practitioner of public relations but he exemplifies a hardening of attitudes by Scaf. The repression of the protestors was the latest in a series of escalating attacks on Egypt's revolutionaries by the 19 generals who make up Scaf, and who have wielded effective power in Egypt since Hosni Mubarak's fall on 11 February 2011. The generals have adopted increasingly violent methods to combat challenges to their power, authorising the use of live ammunition and tear gas against protesters in Alexandria, Cairo and Aswan in April, May, July and September. On 15 May, the junta marked Nakba Day by permitting the firing of live rounds at a demonstration surrounding the Israeli embassy in Cairo which left at least 20 dead.

November 2011 proved to be one of Egypt's bloodiest months with the army employing live ammunition and two types of potentially lethal tear gas in Tahrir Square against mass protests calling for Tantawi's immediate resignation. The repression left 42 dead and hundreds injured and brought forth the following televised statement of intent from Scaf's Major General Mukhtar el-Malla: 'We will not relinquish power because a slogan-chanting crowd said so.'⁴

'The army and the people – one hand' was a key revolutionary slogan heard throughout Egypt during

the 18-day struggle to end Mubarak's dictatorship. The army have played a pivotal role in Egyptian politics since Nasser's coup of 1952. They are perceived as guarantors of those vestiges of Nasser's welfare reforms which have survived into the 21st century. There is also a very real organic connection between the army and the masses. Some 200,000 of the 500,000 soldiers that make up the Egyptian military are draftees.

The army built up enormous reserves of goodwill during the revolution. Over 1,000 lives were lost and 3,000 injured in the movement which ousted Mubarak but things could have been much worse. The Egyptian army is the tenth largest in the world. If it had chosen to move against the revolution, the death toll could have been enormous. But on 31 January 2011, six days into the uprising and on the eve of mass anti-Mubarak demonstrations in Alexandria and Cairo, a military spokesman appeared on television to promise that the army 'would not fire on protestors' as they were 'legitimate' and because 'freedom of expression through peaceful means is guaranteed to everybody'.⁵

This meant the struggle on the streets to depose Mubarak was fought out between revolutionaries and police. The army's relative neutrality in January and February meant that few objected when Scaf took power in Egypt, following Mubarak's resignation, on the promise that it would oversee a swift transition to civilian rule.

But in the period since the fall of Mubarak, Scaf has proved hostile to the democratic aspirations of the revolution. The state of emergency which has been in effect in Egypt since 1981, which bans strikes and protests, stands unchanged. Over 12,000 civilians have been arrested, detained and tried before military courts since the fall of Mubarak – more than were held over the 30 years of his dictatorship. Torture in prisons is as endemic as it was under Mubarak and it was not until December 2011 that the humiliating and degrading 'virginity tests' that some women revolutionaries endured in detention was made illegal.

These measures, and the repeated postponement of civilian elections initially promised for September 2011, have corroded the military's reputation. A poll, conducted in Egypt in October 2011 by the University of Maryland, found 43 per cent of those questioned

believed the military were 'working to slow or reverse the gains of the revolution'.⁶

On Monday, 28 November 2011, while conflict between the military and their opponents was still being played out on the streets of Cairo, the Egyptian people began parliamentary elections in a process of bewildering complexity which took three months to complete. The elections for the lower house of parliament were being held on different dates across the country ending on the 3 January 2012. The rules governing the elections were deliberately confusing and designed to exclude many who were at the heart of the 25 January revolution. There is a ban on political parties that are based on class or religion.⁷ Initial results indicate that the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and the hard-line Islamists, the Salafists, have done well in the elections. But, whatever the outcome, the winners cannot form a government or select ministers. Power will remain with Scaf. The victors of the election will be allowed to form a consultative council which will draft a new constitution under which the next elections will be held in 2013. On 8 December 2011 Scaf announced that it, not the consultative council, would have the final say on the form of the new constitution.⁸ Given the paucity of the 'democracy' won by the masses so far, some commentators have argued that Egypt experienced a military coup rather than a true revolution in February 2011. This underestimates the scale of the achievement of the Egyptian people. Hosni Mubarak ran a brutal police state for 30 years. When Hillary Clinton came to Egypt as the US's Secretary of State in February 2009, her officials handed her a document which gave the following précis of the Mubarak régime's recent activities:

Security forces used unwarranted lethal force and tortured and abused prisoners and detainees, in most cases with impunity ... Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals, in some cases for political purposes, and kept them in prolonged pre-trial detention. The executive branch placed limits on and pressured the judiciary. The government's respect for freedoms of press, association, and religion declined during the year, and the government continued to restrict other civil liberties, particularly freedom of speech.⁹

Yet, without massive donations of financial and military aid from the West, Mubarak could not have survived to torment his people for 30 years. In that time the US alone gave the Egyptian state an annual donation of \$1.5bn and additional donations of military aid. It has been estimated that the US subsidised Mubarak's despotism to the tune of \$64bn. Nor were they alone in their support for the regime: The Campaign against the Arms Trade has revealed that the UK sold Egypt £1.64mn-worth of weapons in 2009 alone, which included components for semi-automatic pistols and sub-machine guns, and arms sales from the EU to Egypt rose from €173mn in 2008 to €293mn in 2009.¹⁰

In rising against Mubarak, the people of Egypt were not only challenging their own rulers, they were dealing a blow to imperialism in the region as well. But Western governments supported Mubarak for reasons that went beyond the strategic role he played in maintaining regional stability in the most economically important region of the planet.

Hosni Mubarak was a champion of neo-liberal economics and his overthrow signalled the complete failure of neo-liberalism in the region. Under Nasser, the Egyptian economy underwent a shift to public ownership with the nationalisation of heavy industries such as iron and steel, cement and construction. By the early 1990s, the public sector dominated the economy accounting for 90 per cent of investment and 37 per cent of annual GDP [Gross Domestic Product]. In 1991, shortly after the collapse of the Stalinist dictatorships in Russia and Eastern Europe, Mubarak signed up to the 'Washington consensus' on free-market reforms for Egypt. In return for a loan of \$7 bn from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mubarak was obliged to restructure the Egyptian economy along neo-liberal lines, adopting policies that are now familiar guiding principles for economic development throughout the world.

The programme of privatisation began with the passage of Law 203 in June 1991 which set a target of privatising 314 public sector companies, with combined assets of £104bn, employing over a million staff.

By June 2002, 190 of the targeted firms had been privatised. They included four cement companies – Beni Suef, Assiut, Alexandria and Torah Portland – and large concerns in textiles, manufacturing and

engineering. This period saw multi-nationals stepping in to buy state-owned companies.¹¹ The drive to neo-liberalism also meant dispensing with price controls on food and other basic necessities. It meant hammering the poor and rewarding the rich. In 2004, for example, the rate of income tax for Egypt's richest was slashed from 42 per cent to 20 per cent. In 2006 Mubarak amended the constitution, purging it of the last remnant of the welfare reforms introduced by Nasser's régime. The changes were designed to 'rid Egypt of socialist principles launched in the 1960s [to] create a favourable atmosphere for foreign investment'.¹²

This process was most obvious in agriculture. One of the most significant developments under Nasser was the expropriation of the landlords. The peasants in village collectives were given state loans to buy plots they had worked on for generations. It took the desperately poor peasants decades to pay off these loans. In 1992 the Egyptian parliament passed Law 96 which decreed that land should be returned to the owners of the pre-Nasser period. Entire villages were to be forcibly evicted from land they had spent decades buying from the state. The state – through cheap land concessions and priority access to water resources – also encouraged the establishment of private factory farms growing luxury foodstuffs such as grapes and strawberries for export to Europe. Over the last 20 years there have been two related trends in Egyptian agriculture: a 1,000 per cent increase in Egypt's agricultural exports (worth in excess of \$1bn in 2005); and, in the same period, between one to four million peasant farmers have been forced off their land and into the cities. Egypt is the world's largest importer of wheat.¹³

A few years ago neo-liberals were pointing to Egypt – the 'tiger on the Nile' – as a vindication of their doctrine. An IMF report published in 2008 ecstatically declared that the Egyptian economy 'continues to impress' attracting £11bn in foreign investment and boasting growth rates of 7.1 per cent.

A tiny few became rich beyond imagination as a result of the changes. The combined wealth of Hosni Mubarak, his wife Suzanne and his two sons, Gamal and Alaa, on the cusp of the revolution is estimated to have been \$70bn. The corrupt clique around Mubarak – the 'one thousand families' – amassed incredible fortunes. In the last weekend of January 2011, 19 private jets owned by

Egypt's richest families escaped from Cairo for Dubai. One contained Hussein Salem, a former intelligence officer close to Mubarak. Salem accumulated a personal fortune of \$58.7bn under Mubarak through his interests in land, hotels and munitions. His involvement in a scam exporting gas to Israel at prices lower than production costs netted him profits of \$2bn and cheated the Egyptian state of \$714mn. He arrived in Dubai with \$500mn in cash in his pockets.¹⁴ Salem is currently held in Spain and being tried in absentia by an Egyptian court for corruption.

The Egyptian governments own Investment Authority exposed just how much of a mirage the Egyptian success story truly was when it reported in 2009 that 90 per cent of its population had been untouched by the neo-liberal boom. That was not news to the vast majority of people trying to survive in the free-market paradise built by Mubarak. In 2007 – with food inflation spiralling at 17 per cent – there were food riots in several cities resulting in 11 deaths as crowds fought for access to state-subsidised bread. In 2000 the World Bank estimated 16 per cent of the population existed on less than \$2 a day. By 2011 that number had grown to 40 per cent.¹⁵

But there was widespread resistance to Mubarak's neo-liberal onslaught. The revolution had its heralds. In the countryside peasants resisted the confiscation of their land. The Egyptian-based Land Centre for Human Rights estimates that between 1998 and 2000, 119 were killed, 846 injured and 1,588 arrested in the struggle over land. Peasants slept in their fields to stop the military taking their plots. Sometimes they won and kept the landlords away. As one victorious peasant woman told the Cairo conference in 2008: 'We are so poor we have nothing but our dignity and our scrap of land. If they come for it we'll defend it. If you take our bread, we'll break your neck.'

In the massive textile factories of the Nile Delta, workers repeatedly went on strike for higher pay and bonuses. In the autumn of 2007, for example, 27,000 workers at the giant Ghazl al-Mahalla textile plant north of Cairo walked out and won 130 days back-pay, improved transport to work, the removal of a corrupt official of the state union and the sack for a hated manager.

In September 2008, 55,000 property tax collectors went on national strike for better conditions. Their bitter

walkout lasted three months and was only won after 5,000 tax collectors and their families staged an 11-day sit-in outside government offices in Tahrir Square. They won a 325 per cent increase in their salaries and the right to form the first independent union in Egypt since 1957.

These seeds of resistance came to full flower in the Egyptian revolution. The Egyptian people rose against Mubarak because of what the neo-liberalism he championed had done to their lives. But Scaf's army chiefs are neo-liberals and businessmen and factory-owners in their own right, with a considerable stake in the economic system built by Mubarak.

This explains the tension in Egyptian society since the fall of Mubarak and Scaf's increasing use of violence. It is committed to maintaining an order which has failed the vast majority of the population. Samir Radwan, the finance minister appointed shortly after Mubarak's removal, began his tenure with the promise that 'our priority is to meet the demands of the people' but he also insisted there would be 'no change' in economic policy.¹⁶ If Radwan couldn't see a contradiction between these two statements, the Egyptian working-class could. Waves of strikes and protests for better working conditions followed Mubarak's fall. They included railway workers and ambulance drivers; hundreds of workers at Telecom Egypt; 1,500 health workers in the public hospital in Kafr Al Zayat; 5,000 postal workers in Cairo; 3,000 workers in the Cairo Public Transport Authority; and 24,000 workers at the Misr Spinning and Weaving textile factory in the Nile delta city of Al-Mahalla.

The animus driving the strikes was summed up by striking Cairo bus driver Mustafa Mohammed in February 2011: 'We are immersed in debts. We are staying until our demands are met.'¹⁷

Workers have gone on to organise themselves into 25 independent unions in manufacturing and industry; 28 for clerical workers; 15 in transport; four in education; eight in the health sector; and three in post and telecommunications.¹⁸

In March 2011 a strike wave by textile workers, bus drivers, tube operatives, postal workers and tourist officials involved 85,000 workers. In September 750,000 workers, including airport staff, doctors and irrigation operatives, went on strike. They included

26,000 sugar refinery workers and 40,000 teachers, whose banners read 'Meet our demands or no school this year'. It is estimated half-a-million Egyptian workers went on strike between late September and mid-October 2011.¹⁹

Their demands were not just for higher pay – although low pay is endemic. In 2008 junior doctors unsuccessfully campaigned for 1,000 Egyptian pounds (£100 sterling) a month as a professional minimum. The Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions has demanded a minimum monthly wage of 1,200 Egyptian pounds while the government has only agreed – in principle – to 700. But workers have demanded both economic and political changes. They have called for the end to temporary employment contracts ubiquitous throughout Egyptian workplaces. They have demanded a higher tax rate for the wealthy and, in addition to a minimum wage for workers, a maximum wage for their bosses. Workers and students have also begun the process of expelling the 'little Mubaraks' from factories, offices, hospitals and schools. The 'little Mubaraks' are both the political overseers from Mubarak's National Democratic Party, who were commonplace throughout Egyptian society prior to the revolution, or just obnoxious managers who have abused their authority.

The workers' movement has been resisted by Scaf and conservative forces since the overthrow of Mubarak. Only days after assuming power, Scaf issued 'Communiqué No 5' urging Labour leaders to call off strikes. As doctors and policemen marched in Cairo for better terms and working conditions, state television characterised strikers as 'selfish' contrasting the unity of Tahrir Square with workers' sectional demands: 'Some government institutions have staged protests despite life returning to normal at a time when all citizens should stand together. Honourable citizens can see that protests at this critical time will have a negative effect in harming the security of the country.'²⁰ The argument that 'we're all in this together' has often been used by the opponents of the workers' movement since February.

The struggle within the Egyptian revolution – that is, who gets to decide when a revolution is over – has been at the centre of every revolution over the last 200 years of world history.

For Scaf and its neo-liberal sympathisers, the revolution was 'over' with the fall of Mubarak. They want a soft landing for the revolution in which Egyptian society continues on its neo-liberal path – 'Mubarakism' without Mubarak. Their biggest success in this project was getting mass approval in March 2011 for the constitutional reforms under which December's elections were conducted. Fourteen million took part in the referendum and 77 per cent voted in favour of the amendments, which are confusing, anti-democratic and designed to exclude authentic working-class and peasant representation. The constitution's insistence that Islam is the state religion of Egypt won it the support of The Muslim Brotherhood, who then won approval for it among their supporters. The Muslim Brotherhood under Mubarak had a clandestine membership of two million people who came under its direction in some sense. However, they are not a monolithic organisation and, though their leadership is conservative and market-orientated with much in common with the ruling-order, their base shares the general poverty of the masses. Consequently, the Brotherhood has experienced a number of splits since the 25 January revolution. At the time of writing it's clear that The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party has done well in the elections. But their victory will not signal that the revolution is 'over'. The Parliament that comes out of the elections will be very weak and reliant on Scaf. In addition the Freedom and Justice Party is pro-business and offers the masses little by way of change.

The revolution is far from 'over'. For all the repressive powers at Tantawi's disposal, the Egyptian masses have won, and continue to win, amazing victories. It was the power of the Egyptian 'street' which forced the government into opening the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian-Gaza border in June. It also ensured the government could not guarantee to Israel that it would continue to be supplied with cheap Egyptian gas. In August, Hosni Mubarak himself was hauled before an Egyptian court on his sick-bed to begin his trial on charges of murder and corruption. The ruling-order would have preferred Mubarak to die quietly in Sharm el-Sheikh but they were forced to begin his televised trial – and the trial of his two sons – through the pressure of street protests throughout the country.

In addition, those who would have the revolution 'over' must deal with the continued existence of the popular

committees. These were created during the January uprising to protect state property like the library at Alexandria and the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Popular committees were also formed in urban communities across Egypt to protect neighbourhoods and to ensure milk and food supplies. Three networks of popular committees continue to function, organising counter-demonstrations to abuses by the authorities.

At the end of 2011 came news which guaranteed, like it or not, that the revolution is far from 'over'. As inflation, pushed by spiralling food prices, touched 10.4 per cent, Prime Minister Kamal el-Ganzouri gave notice of plans to reduce public spending by \$3.3bn. This was followed by finance minister Momtaz el-Saeed's announcement that he was imposing a 10 per cent cut on the bonuses of government employees. The government of Egypt is telling its people, 40 per cent of whom live on less than \$2 a day, that they must accept an austerity programme.²¹

The Egyptian revolution is not the work of a day; it is a process which has not finished and an event of worldwide significance. It has scared the right people. In February 2011, 45 socialists were arrested in Zimbabwe for showing a video about the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions. The 45 were originally charged with treason and faced the death penalty. Most of them were released, following an international campaign against their arrest, but Munyaradzi Gwisai, Tafadzwa Choto, Tatenda Mombeyarara, Edson Chakuma, Hopewell Gumbo and Welcome Zimuto are currently on trial charged with 'conspiracy to commit public violence' and face the prospect of 20 years in jail for watching a video about Mubarak's fall. Despots understand the potent lesson behind the Arab Spring.

The Egyptian revolution has also shamed and exposed the right people. In February 2011 the British Prime Minister David Cameron made a stop-over in Cairo and visited Tahrir Square in support of the revolution. In an address to the Kuwaiti Parliament, Cameron was full of praise for the 'brave and peaceful' protestors 'hungry for political and economic freedom'. He also insisted that 'Violence is never the answer to people's legitimate aspirations.'²² But Cameron made these comments in the context of a three-day tour of the Gulf States aimed at increasing British arms sales in the region. He was accompanied by a 36-strong team of salesmen which

included representatives from what is delicately termed the defence industry such as BAE Systems, Rolls Royce and the Cobham Group. The UK leads the world in sales to the Middle East and the Gulf States of fighter-jets, sub-machine guns, electric batons and tear gas.

The Egyptian revolution has also inspired millions across the world. The tens of thousands of public sector workers who took to the streets of Madison, Wisconsin in defence of trade union rights were galvanised by the Egyptian revolution. The OCCUPY movement, which has mobilised millions across the planet against the systematic inequality of capitalism, drew inspiration from the achievements of the Egyptian people. In overthrowing Mubarak and challenging the logic of a system that produced Mubarak, the Egyptian masses have given the world a glimpse of a political and economic alternative that orthodox economists deny exists. They have put revolutionary change back on the political agenda.

Victory is far from assured. Tantawi and his cronies may well continue to dictate Egypt's future and subject its people to still more neo-liberalism, inequality and poverty. But there is a chance that the spirit behind the still-growing workers movement can take the Egyptian people down a better path. In doing so, they will light the way for others looking for a better way to live.

The working people and poor of Egypt know what is at stake. In June 2011, I attended a meeting of the newly formed Democratic Workers Party (DWP) in Giza. It was made up of activists from many industries, who had all been at the centre of events in January and who were driving the flourishing independent trade-union movement in their respective industries.

They were debating their prospects in the elections and some were bemoaning the fact that The Muslim Brotherhood were likely to do well – especially, someone noted, in the rural areas where the workers were 'backward and sectarian'. One middle-aged man from the Brickmakers' Union gave an answer to that:

I'd like to respond to the argument that the poor in the towns and countryside are more reactionary and backward than the workers in the cities. I come from Atfih in Helwan. It's true that there has been sectarian

violence there recently between Muslims and Copts. A church was set on fire ... It's also likely that the Muslim Brotherhood will do well there but only because they provide a welfare structure for the desperately poor which the state won't. Yet people want something better. I began work in a brick factory at the age of 5. That's very common. Parents are still forced to send children as young as 4 or 5 to work there. They have no other option. But despite this, Atfih never voted for Mubarak. Despite his gerrymandering we never gave him our mandate. So don't tell me that the country-people are instinctively reactionary. If the DWP could show the poor in places like Atfih an alternative to poverty or charity, if we could point the way to a future where child labour is a memory, we would get the support of the people in the countryside.

This is the challenge to which the workers' movement in Egypt must rise.

About the author

Sasha Simic lives and works in Hackney, London. He is a grass-roots activist and a shop steward in the USDAW union. Sasha is also a member of the Hackney Alliance Against the Cuts. He has visited Egypt many times in recent years, most often to attend the Cairo conference, and has written on Egypt for a number of publications.

References

- 1 Sections of this essay appeared as articles written by Sasha Simic in *The Chartist* #249 and #254.
- 2 For the full list of signatories, please see final page.
- 3 *The New York Times*, 22 January 2012.
- 4 *The Independent*, 24 November 2011.
- 5 Reuters Africa, 11 January 2011.
- 6 *Newsweek*, 27 November 2011.
- 7 BBC website, 30 April 2011.
- 8 'Egypt's military will have final say on country's new constitution', *The Guardian*, 7 December 2011.
- 9 'Britain and the US's hypocritical condemnation of the Egyptian dictatorship', Eamonn McCann, *Socialist Worker*, 5 February 2011.
- 10 CATT press release, 8 February 2011.
- 11 'Privatisation programme lurches slowly on', Simon Brindle, *The Middle East*, April, 2003.
- 12 *Al-Ahram* #830, February 2007.
- 13 Ahramonline, 22 January 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/31140.aspx>
- 14 Globes [online], Israel business news, 31 January 2011, www.globes.co.il/serveen/globes/nodeview.asp?fid=942
- 15 'The upheaval in Egypt, an end or a beginning?', *The Economist*, 3 February 2011.
- 16 <http://news.egypt.com/en/2011021413542/news/-business/minister-no-change-in-egypt-economic-policies.html>
- 17 'Egypt: workers have taken to the stage of history', *Socialist Worker* #2239, 19 February 2011.
- 18 'Workers can change Egypt', *Socialist Worker* #2262, 30 July 2011.
- 19 <http://menasolidaritynetwork.com/2011/09/13/egypt-teachers-tell-generals-meet-our-demands-or-no-school-this-year/>.
- 20 www.news.com.au/world/egypts-military-get-back-to-work/story-fn6sb9br-1226006043440
- 21 'Egypt to resume talks with IMF over emergency \$3bn credit facility', *The Guardian*, 11 January 2012.
- 22 www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12533520

Declaration of Egyptian Independent Trade Unionists, Cairo, 19 February 2011

The following signatories to the Independent Trade Union Charter include all the delegates and the industries they represent – nurses, oil workers, tax collectors and others. This is a concrete achievement of the revolution. While the *Opinion* is written in general and abstract terms, this list represents the actuality of the revolt. The signatories are people who were at the centre of events, the living and breathing revolution:

Ahmad Kamal Salah, Meteorological Office employee; **Hossam Muhammad Abdallah Ali**, health technicians; **Sayyida Al-Sayyid Muhammad Fayiz**, nurse; **Ashraf Abd al-Wanis**, Al-Fayyum Sugar Refinery; **Abd-al-Qadir Mansur**, Umar Effendi Department Store; **Hafiz Nagib Muhammad**, Future Pipes Company, 6th October City; **Muhammad Hassan**, Egypt – Helwan Textiles Company; **Mahmud Abd-al-Munsaf Al-Alwani**, Tura Cement; **Ali Mahmud Nagi**, Egyptian Commercial Pharmaceutical Company; **Umar Muhammad Abd-al-Aziz**, Hawamidiyya Sugar Refinery; **Muhammad Galal**, Egyptian Pharmaceuticals; **Shazli Sawi Shazli**, Suez Fertilisers Company; **Muhammad Ibrahim Hassan**, Military Factory No. 45; **Wasif Musa Wahba**, Military Factory No. 999; **Gamil Fathi Hifni**, General Transport Authority; **Adil Abd-al-Na'im**, Cairo General Contractors; **Ali Hassan Abu Aita**, Al-Qanah Rope Co., Port Sa'id; **Hind Abd-al-Gawad Ibrahim**, Information Centre; **Hamada Abu-Zaid**, Information Centre; **Muhammad Khairy Zaid**, Information Centre; **Hatim Salah Sayyid**, General Authority for Cultural Centres; **Muhammad Abd-al-Hakim**, National Postal Authority; **Ahmad Islam**, International Ibex Company; **Tariq Sayyid Mahmud**, Military Factory 99; **Nabil Mahmud**, Military Factory 999; **Mahmud Shukri**, trade unionist; **Ahmad Faruq**, Military Factory 999; **Usama Al-Sayyid**, Military Factory 999; **Yasir Al-Sayyid Ibrahim**, Future Pipe Industries; **Mahmud Ali Ahmad**, tannery workers; **Abd-al-Rasul Abd-al-Ghani**, future workers; **Ali Al-Sayyid Umar**, Effendi Department Store; **Kamal Abu Aita**, property tax collectors (RETAU); **Ahmad Abd-al-Sabur**, property tax collectors (RETAU); **Salah Abd-al-Hamid**, property tax collectors (RETAU); **Mahmud Umar**, property tax collectors (RETAU); **Khalid Galal Muhammad**, worker Muhammad Zaki Isma'il, Petrotrade Company.



Independent Advisory Services for the Modern Commonwealth

Maximise your membership

The CA/B can help your country make the most of Commonwealth membership for maximum impact at home and abroad.

We offer

Strategic advice — we identify opportunities in the Commonwealth calendar to champion your national and regional priorities and provide political and media advice on how to do so effectively

Training — we design and run introductory courses for government officials on the modern Commonwealth and contemporary Commonwealth issues

Materials — we provide speechwriting services for Heads of Government, Ministers and senior officials on Commonwealth and international issues to increase effectiveness in international fora, during bi-lateral visits and on Commonwealth Day. We also provide fact sheets and web content

A gateway to the Commonwealth family — we can help you navigate the 90+ Commonwealth institutions and organisations and help you access their advice and assistance

CA/B

Expert knowledge — we have a hand-selected team of expert speechwriters, senior political advisors, experienced trainers and media professionals

Impact — as the only think tank focusing solely on the modern Commonwealth we have unique influence and impact in Commonwealth circles

Strategy — the CA/B follows the Commonwealth agenda closely and has strong working partnerships with Commonwealth institutions and civil society organisations

Tailored packages — we provide tailored packages, materials and support to suit your needs

Affordable — as a not-for-profit unit we provide an affordable service

For more information please contact
Ms Daisy Cooper
Director, Commonwealth Advisory Bureau
Institute of Commonwealth Studies
University of London
Senate House
London WC1E 7HU
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7862 8865
Email: CAB@sas.ac.uk
Web: www.commonwealthadvisorybureau.org



About the Commonwealth Advisory Bureau

The Commonwealth Advisory Bureau is the independent think-tank and advisory service for the modern Commonwealth of fifty-four nations and nearly two billion citizens. We specialise in issues of Commonwealth policy including globalisation, democracy, civil society and human rights.

Part of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, we run projects in countries across the Commonwealth. We produce quality policy-relevant reports and briefings to inform and influence policy makers in over a quarter of the world's countries. We seek to put the policy choices before the Commonwealth into sharper focus, exploring options and suggesting new directions. CA/B projects are changing the way people think on issues such as making elections fairer, recognising the needs of indigenous peoples and assisting development in small island states. We are committed to continuing our work to inform and improve policy and decision making across the Commonwealth.

We also offer confidential and impartial advice to countries interested in applying to join the Commonwealth, and can help existing member countries make the most of Commonwealth membership for maximum impact at home and abroad.

About the Opinions Series

CA/B Opinions are authored opinion pieces and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CA/B. The purpose of the publication series is to stimulate debate and dialogue around some of the most pressing issues in the Commonwealth.